

ROPER

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gered the nation's medical establishment by publishing hospital death rates and listing nursing home safety violations — a practice usually associated with consumer-oriented groups.

All the decisions he'll make at the CDC, he said, won't be free of controversy.

The CDC is responsible for investigating and preventing the nation's major health scourges, including cancer, heart disease and AIDS — to which 40 to 50 percent of his more than \$1 billion budget will be devoted.

AIDS advocates are calling for increased government funding for AIDS research, education and treatment. But many medical specialists are decrying the robust federal AIDS budget, which is slightly more than the budget for cancer that killed more than 12 times as many people last year.

"It is surely true that we are spending an awful lot of money on AIDS . . . It's also important to bear in mind that the things we are learning from the nation's effort against AIDS from a biomedical research perspective have an important carry-over effect into other areas," Roper said.

Information concerning the nature of the viruses, how they replicate, how the body's immune system works and how to build that immune system will have an important benefit well beyond the AIDS effort, Roper believes.

"It's rather like the nation's effort in space," he said. "Sure, we have gotten some men on the moon and some machines to Mars, but we got everything from Tang to Teflon to whatever else as spinoffs from the space effort. And there are similar spinoffs from the AIDS effort."

Other health concerns — including "our nation's embarrassingly high infant mortality rate" and smoking-related diseases — will be given priority attention.

"I believe it is going to be necessary for us to find a way to finance health care for those people who don't have it in order to solve the problem (infant mortality)," Roper said.

Emphasizing his point, Roper said the District of Columbia has a vast network of public programs providing and financing health for the poor. Yet the infant mortality rate is rising rapidly — "primarily because babies are being born to mothers who use crack."

"All of the health care in the world is not going to solve that," Roper said. "We have got to deal with the problems of young people using drugs, abusing their bodies, getting pregnant at an age when they are not prepared to deal with the responsibility of a child. All of those kinds of things."

While he applauds Congress' action banning smoking on domestic airlines, he believes it will be citizens — not a federal law — who clear the air of tobacco smoke.

"It's clear that it's becoming increasingly socially unacceptable to smoke — not only in Utah, but in other places," he said.

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